



TOO THIN

YESTERDAY I SET TO THE TASK OF WORKING UP SOME FIREWOOD FOR A FRIEND. Discovering that his supply for this year was running out, he contacted me a couple of weeks ago to ask if I might have a tree or two sufficiently dead to be burnable yet this winter season. So about a week ago, axe in hand, I went searching in our timber.

In the small stand that separates the pond from our barn I located an oak tree that had already toppled at a forty-five degree angle, with its base on the ground but its upper portion leaned into another tree. From the outside the tree appeared to be profoundly dead, but perhaps still usable. With a few whacks of my axe I determined that there was indeed still good wood (as opposed to the useless pith of the too-far-dead oak) beneath the disintegrating bark.

So yesterday I went to the barn, gassed up

my chainsaw, hooked up my cart to the tractor and wound my way over ice slabs, fallen branches and a thick carpet of leaves through to the aforementioned victim.

Making my first cut from underneath the trunk, the two sections quickly separated and fell to the ground. Only then did I discover that the only good wood in the tree was that thin layer I had earlier exposed with my axe.

The rest of the trunk was hollow.



Years ago I was invited to attend a Men's Bible Study/Breakfast. Meeting at 6:45 every Wednesday morning, this group of around 100 guys would listen to and discuss a topical curriculum (with ties to James Dobson's *Focus On The Family*) on becoming "the kind of man God wants us to be." It was an inter-denominational study to which—at least on

Reflections
by the Pond

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*Nothing between my soul and the Saviour,
Naught of this world's delusive dream;
I have renounced all sinful pleasure,
Jesus is mine; there's nothing between.*

*Nothing between, like worldly pleasure,
Habits of life though harmless they seem,
Must not my heart from Him e'er sever,
He is my all, there's nothing between.*

*Nothing between my soul and the Saviour,
So that His blessed face may be seen;
Nothing preventing the least of His favor,
Keep the way clear! Let nothing between.*

Charles A. Tindley

the day I attended—I was the only one who brought an actual Bible. In fact, the recitation of the quote in the sentence above was the one and only time God was even mentioned. Scripture was never cited—much less used as a source text.

Allowing for the obligatory time of chatting over coffee and doughnuts, this “study” consisted of about 20 minutes of talk from the leader, followed by about 15 minutes of small-group discussion.

This “study” was no doubt a profitable time for many in attendance; I heard more than one person sing its praise. But we shouldn't call it anything but what it was: an opportunity for essentially decent men to gather together to encourage each other to be better husbands and fathers. God's word was, sadly, absent.

On another occasion, years later, Linda and I visited the worship service of a local church where, again, so far as we could determine, we were the only ones in attendance with Bibles. We soon understood that at least one reason there were no Bibles present was that they were not needed. The pastor's sermon was utterly devoid of references to scripture, consisting in the main of one empty platitude after another.



Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness...

2 Timothy 2:15-16

We live in a time when it is considered unseemly to speak plainly about the things of God. It is considered at least bad manners, or, in the extreme, socially suicidal, to speak unblinkingly about such things as absolute truth, purity, the inerrancy of God's word.

Sadly this politically correct cowardice has oozed even into our churches, where, in some cases, the program has become so inoffensively diluted, so bland, so insipid as to be utterly meaningless. In such gatherings the teaching has become so thin as to become a new “gospel” unto itself, devoid of any Scriptural basis.

For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!

2 Corinthians 11:2-4 NKJV

This modern paradigm of dumbing-down “church” so that it will be blandly inoffensive to those who are most easily offended has, not surprisingly, resulted in Christians who look solid through-and-through from the outside, but are hollow on the inside. Their faith, and comprehension of God's truth, are too thin. So thin indeed that they are easy marks for just about any fast-talking gospel salesman that whispers sweet nothings in their ears.

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James 1:5-8



The church building looks good on the outside: a proper steeple pointing heavenward, stained glass windows bespeaking piety, an imposing structure that will not be moved until the day Christ returns.

Sadly, too many times what takes place on the inside rings hollow and empty—and is an insult to the price Jesus paid for it all.

We try so hard not to offend each other, that we end up offending the Lord Jesus instead.

